

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 03563 091541Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
----- 102271

O R 091419Z JUN 75
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7013
INFO AMEMBARSY CAIRO

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVI 3563

EXDIS

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, XF, IS.; 3&, US
SUBJECT: RABIN AS NEGOTIATOR; AN ASSESSMENT

1. PRIME MINISTER

RABIN IN TALKS THIS WEEK WITH PRESIDENT FORD WILL BE TOUGH AND CONFIDENT NEGOTIATOR. CABINET HAS JUST ENDORSED POSITION THAT GOI'S MARCH DECISIONS ARE STILL VALID AND THAT ANY NEW ISRAELI FLEXIBILITY DEPENDS ON EGYPT SHOWING READINESS TO MAKE NEW CONcessions. AS MUCH AS RABIN SINCERELY WANTS TO ACHIEVE INTERIM EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI AGREEMENT, HE WILL NOT MAKE NEW CONCESSIONS UNILATERALLY, AND HE IS ASSURED THAT THIS POSITION WOULD ENJOY STRONG SUPPORT BOTH AT CABINET LEVEL AND WITH ISRAELI PUBLIC.

2. RABIN'S DECISION IN MARCH TO REUSE WITHDRAWAL FROM ENTIRE PASSES AND OIL FIELDS IN ABSENCE OF EGYPTIAN NON-BELLIGERENCY COMMITMENT WAS SEEN BY MOST ISRAELIS AS HIGH WATER MARK OF HIS FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE. DECISION WAS INTERPRETED HERE AS STANDING UP TO U.S. AND EGYPT, AND IT WAS SUPPORTED BY ISRAELIS OF ALMOST ALL POLITICAL PERSUASIONS.

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3. RABIN'S DOMESTIC POSITION TODAY IS FIRM. ALTHOUGH

NOT A CHARISMATIC LEADER IN MOLD OF BEN GURION, THERE
IS BROAD CONSENSUS THAT FOR
FORESEEABLE FUTURE HE IS HERE TO STAY.
THERE IS NO IMMEDIATE THREAT OF A
CHALLENGE TO HIS LEADERSHIP,

NOR ANY EVIDENT
PRESSURE FOR EARLY ELECTION. PROPONENTS OF NATIONAL
UNITY GOVERNMENT IN OPPOSITION CAMP ARE BESET BY THEIR
OWN TROUBLES.

4. ON APPROACH TO
NEGOTIATION, CABINET REMAINS
DIVIDED ON PREFERRED APPROACH. RABIN ENJOYS BACKING
OF MOST OF LABOR PARTY AND NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY IN
CONTINUING TO FAVOR STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH, WHILE
MINORITY VOICES OF MAPAM AND INDEPENDENT LIBERALS
FAVOR SEEKING OVERALL PEACE INITIATIVE. THEY, AS WELL
AS FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER EBAN AND OTHERS WHO HAVE
BEEN URGING THAT GOI DECIDE NOW ON OVERALL ISRAELI
PEACE INITIATIVE, STILL LACK SUFFICIENT CLOUT
TO COMPEL SHIFT IN GOI POLICY.

5. IN RECENT MONTHS, RABIN HAS STRENGTHENED HIS CON-
TROL OVER GOI
DECISION-MAKING MECHANISM. NEGOTIATING
TROIKA(RABIN,
ALLON AND PERES) STILL EXISTS, AND
DOUBTLESS WOULD WORK AGAIN TOGETHER IF AND WHEN NEW
ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS GETS UNDERWAY. BUT RABIN LATELY
HAS BEEN MAKING MORE DECISIONS BY HIMSELF(E. G. SHARON
AND ZEEVI APPOINTMENTS), AND IS REPEATEDLY USING HIS
ADVISERS INCREASINGLY ONLY IN TECHNICAL, NOT POLICY-MAKING CAPACITY.

6. TAKING INTO ACCOUNT ALL THE COMPLEXITIES OF ISRAELI
DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE, PARTICULARLY THE DIVERSITIES
OF VIEWS WITHIN THE CABINET AND NARROW MARGIN OF RULING
COALITION, WE NONETHELESS BELIEVE RABIN TODAY IS THE DE-
TERMINING FORCE OF ISRAELI FOREIGN POLICY. ESSENTIALLY
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A PRAGMATIST--NEITHER A DOVE NOR A HAWK--HE FIRMLY
BELIEVES IN CORRECTNESS
OF POSITION HE TOOK IN MARCH
AND IN LEGITIMACY OF DEMANDING NOW THAT NEXT MOVE
IS UP TO EGYPT.
HE HAS NO DOUBT BEEN
ENCOURAGED, NOT ONLY BY SUPPORT THIS STAND ENJOYS IN
ISRAELI PUBLIC OPINION, BUT BY INDICATIONS THAT KEY

SECTORS OF U.S. OPINION, PARTICULARLY IN CONGRESS,
ARE STILL FIRMLY BEHIND ISRAEL(LETTER OF 76 SENATORS HAD
STRONG IMPACT ON HIM). IN SUM, HE IS MORE ASSURED AND
SELF-CONFIDENT THAN SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, AND WILL BE COMING
TO WASHINGTON FROM WHAT HE PERCEIVES AS POSITION OF
STRENGTH.

VELIOTES

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PEACE PLANS, NEGOTIATIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975TELAV03563
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750200-0597
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750667/aaaacjag.tel
Line Count: 122
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 AUG 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <28 NOV 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RABIN AS NEGOTIATOR; AN ASSESSMENT
TAGS: PFOR, XF, IS, EG, US, (RABIN, YITZHAK)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006